

Alba, the fluorescent bunny.

Photo: Chrystelle Fontaine

GLOW IN THE FAMILY

"Alba", the green fluorescent bunny, is an albino rabbit. This means that, since she has no skin pigment, under ordinary environmental conditions she is completely white with pink eyes. Alba is not green all the time. She only glows when illuminated with the correct light. When (and only when) illuminated with blue light (maximum excitation at 488 nm), she glows with a bright green light (maximum emission at 509 nm). She was created with EGFP, an enhanced version (i.e., a synthetic mutation) of the original wild-type green fluorescent gene found in the jellyfish *Aequorea Victoria*. EGFP gives about two orders of magnitude greater fluorescence in mammalian cells (including human cells) than the original jellyfish gene [2].

The first phase of the "GFP Bunny" project was completed in February 2000 with the birth of "Alba" in Jouy-en-Josas, France. This was accomplished with the invaluable assistance of zoosystemician Louis Bec [3] and scientists Louis-Marie Houdebine and Patrick Prunet [4]. Alba's name was chosen by consensus between my wife Ruth, my daughter Miriam, and myself. The second phase is the ongoing debate, which started with the first public announcement of Alba's birth, in the context of the Planet Work conference, in San Francisco, on May 14, 2000. The third phase will take place when the bunny comes home to Chicago, becoming part of my family and living with us from this point on.

Front

HADRIANVS AVG COSIII PP

Imperial title 'Hadrianus Augustus, Consul for the 3rd time and Father of his People'. Bare head of Hadrian, facing left.



Back

HISPANIA (Spain)

The personification of Spain, Hispania, reclines holding a branch and resting her left arm on some rocks, with a rabbit in front.



Coin issued by the Roman emperor Hadrian, AD134-8; 20mm
Hadrian reigned from 117 to 138 AD. Collection Museum of London.